



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE HELPS COLOMBIA CREATE TRADE TRANSPARENCY UNIT TO COMBAT MONEY LAUNDERING AND OTHER CRIMES

-- Hundreds of Computers Provided to Colombian Authorities --

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA – Special Agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), delivered approximately 215 computers and other equipment to Colombia's Customs Service or "DIAN" today as part of an effort to help the Colombian government create a Trade Transparency Unit to combat trade-based money laundering and other financial crimes in that country.

The creation of a Trade Transparency Unit in Colombia is one of many objectives of Plan Colombia, a U.S.-funded campaign to help the Colombian government combat terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, contraband smuggling, tax evasion, and other crimes. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and the Department of Treasury are participating in this effort with the Colombian government.

Under the auspices of Plan Colombia, ICE and Colombia's DIAN are developing an unprecedented, joint database to facilitate the exchange of trade and financial information between the two agencies. This database is already helping Colombian authorities combat financial crimes at home and is enhancing the ability of the United States and Colombia to target money laundering rings operating in both nations. The addition of computers and software from ICE will only enhance this effort.

"Trade-based money laundering is an enormous problem that few people understand. Thankfully, the Government of Colombia has recognized this threat for many years and remains committed to addressing it. ICE is pleased to work with Colombian authorities in creating a unit and database specifically devoted to combating this problem," said Steve Hayward, the ICE Attaché in Colombia.

The Trade Transparency database is being established in conjunction with Colombia's financial infrastructure modernization project called "Project MUISCA". Project MUISCA is a Colombian Information Technology consolidation and modernization project that has been supported since its inception by ICE in concert with the International Monetary Fund. This project is a priority for the Colombian President and has been endorsed by the U.S. Ambassador to Colombia.

In recent years, information sharing between ICE and Colombia's DIAN has helped identify and dismantle major money laundering operations in the United States and Colombia. Some of the most

successful joint investigations by ICE and DIAN have targeted drug money laundering organizations that used the import/export of gold and other precious metals to launder illicit drug proceeds.

ICE has also worked closely with Colombia's DIAN for many years to combat a money laundering system known as the Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE). The BMPE is perhaps the largest and most sophisticated form of money laundering in the Western Hemisphere – transforming billions of U.S. dollars derived from illegal drug sales into “clean” pesos in Colombia every year. The BMPE uses international trade to facilitate the movement of illegally generated proceeds.

By working together and sharing economic data, ICE and Colombia's DIAN are routinely able to identify trade anomalies between the United States and Colombia that may be indicative of illicit money flows and money laundering. Subsequent joint investigations have resulted in numerous arrests and prosecutions of individuals using international commerce to launder illicit funds.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.